

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES.

*Catalogue of the Birds of Suffolk; with an Introduction and Remarks on their Distribution.* By CHURCHILL BABINGTON, D.D., V.P.R.S.I., F.L.S., &c. London: John Van Voorst, 1884-86.

AMONGST the workers in the vast field of Natural History there are none who confer a greater public benefit than those who undertake the task of working up local lists, and no one who has not had to refer to these lists for working purposes can realize their extreme utility; and Mr. Babington, to whom we are indebted for the present Catalogue of the Birds of Suffolk, has executed the task he has undertaken conscientiously and well. This Catalogue is a reprint of a series of articles issued in the 'Proceedings of the Royal Suffolk Institute of Archæology and Natural History' in 1884-86, together with sundry additions and corrections, and in its present form constitutes an important addition to the many local lists that have been published on the ornithology of Great Britain.

Mr. Babington has collected from all possible sources what available information is to be had respecting the avifauna of the county, and has most carefully sifted the evidence respecting the occurrences of the rarer stragglers. It is to be regretted that the author has elected, in dividing the county into districts, to make use of the hundreds, instead of making natural divisions such as are referred to in the earlier pages of his chapter on the distribution of the birds, inasmuch as these latter divisions would be readily comprehensible to any ornithologist, whereas but few will be any the wiser respecting the general distribution of the birds even after a careful study of the map of the hundreds which is issued as a frontispiece.

It is much to be deplored that several species which formerly used to breed regularly, if not commonly, have now become rare and have entirely ceased to nest in their old haunts. Thus the Marsh-Harrier is now said to be "apparently the rarest of the Harriers in Suffolk," and the Hobby, though stated to "breed in several districts," does not appear to have been found nesting in the county for some years past. The Spoonbill and the Black Tern have been driven away owing to their breeding-places having been invaded; and even the Black-headed Gull, which formerly bred on a mere at Brandon, has forsaken its old haunts in consequence of the plundering of its nests. It is satisfactory, however, to find that, in consequence of the Act of Parliament for the Preservation of Wild Birds, "the song-birds and several other species, for example the Ducks, Gulls, and Plovers, have recently increased in numbers in Suffolk," and that the Bearded Titmouse "is still (1886) found in some numbers at Oulton Broad."

Seven photographs of rare birds are issued with the work, two of which (plates v. and vi.) are of the immature bird supposed to be referable to *Cygnus buccinator*, a species which has been included

as doubtful in the British list; and it would be well if this specimen, which is now in the Ipswich Museum, were carefully compared with examples of the Mute and Trumpeter Swans, so as to set the question finally at rest.

On the whole we confidently recommend Mr. Babington's Catalogue to all who take an interest in British birds.

*Birds on the British List, their title to enrolment considered, especially with reference to the British Ornithological Union's List of British Birds, with a few Remarks on Evolution and Notes upon the rarer Eggs.* By the Rev. GREGORY SMART, M.A., late Scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge. London: R. H. Porter, 1886.

SEVERAL Lists of British Birds have been published during the last few years, each one, to a large extent at least, filling up a void space in our ornithological literature; but we must confess that we fail to discover in what way the present List tends to supply any want in that direction. It appears to be a mere random collection of many of the doubtful species included in the British Ornithologists' (not Ornithological, as above stated) Union's List, together with many not referred to in that List, and which most undoubtedly never have been met with in the British Isles, some of which (as, for instance, *Mimus polyglottus*, *Lanius excubitoroides*, *Archibuteo sancti-johannis*, *Podilymbus podiceps*, &c.) appear to be included merely to afford an opportunity of describing their eggs in the author's collection. Judging, indeed, from the notes given by the author, we can only conclude that he is a mere egg-collector, with but little knowledge of ornithology or experience in natural history, as in many cases he appears to have got hopelessly befogged. For instance, he says (p. 41) that if the eggs of *Anthus ludovicianus* in his collection be authentic, "*Anthus ludovicianus* and *Anthus campestris* can scarcely be conspecific," a statement which he could never have made had he any acquaintance with these so totally distinct species. Again (p. 42), he quotes under *Anthus cervinus* a note by Mr. Robert Gray (not Grey) on *Anthus ludovicianus*, as if these two species were identical; and further to complicate matters, he remarks that, as "these birds have not been preserved, and Professor Newton is inclined to assign them to *rupestris*, it will depend on Grey's (*sic*) capability of distinguishing between the two forms"—thus inferring that Gray is doubtful of the distinctions between *Anthus rupestris* and *A. cervinus*. Both forms of Spotted Eagle are included in the List as British, whereas it would appear that only one (*Aquila clanga*) has really been proved to have occurred in Great Britain; and at p. 9, under his note on *Aquila clanga*, he describes the eggs of that species as having been taken in Pomerania, a locality where only *Aquila pomarina*, and not *Aquila clanga*, is known to nest.

Under the notes on *Acanthyllis* (*Chatura*) *caudacuta*, after stating